



Flying Start Services
Families First Services
Childcare Services
Family Information Services

8 April 2020

Dear colleagues,

We are living and working through unprecedented times and facing enormous challenges brought about by the coronavirus pandemic. In the space of a few weeks the lives of all Welsh citizens have changed dramatically. Schools and businesses have closed and most of us are working from or staying at home.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you wholeheartedly for your continued hard work and professionalism in delivering our Flying Start and Families First programmes as well as providing crucial information and childcare services to families. The support that you provide is always invaluable. But it is at times of crisis when our children, young people and families rely on your services more than ever. I am extremely grateful for the way in which you have responded to a very difficult and stressful situation.

I want to pay tribute to our childcare providers and Flying Start settings, particularly those who have gone to great efforts to stay open to care for the children of critical workers as well the most vulnerable children in our communities. Providing safe care for those who need it at a particularly challenging time has played a big part in supporting our response to COVID-19. We are doing everything we can to support you in this.

We are redirecting the funding available through the Childcare Offer for Wales to ensure it supports those families most in need at this time, ensuring childcare for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children is available. Under our new scheme, critical workers will have full access to funded childcare provision for their pre-school aged children. We need this scheme to be up and running as quickly as possible, so we will be giving our Local Authorities flexibility to manage the provision and demand locally. Cwlwm, the body that represents the sector, will be undertaking a workforce survey to identify childcare practitioners willing to work from alternative settings, as needed, and CIW are willing to work with you all to make changes to the operating models and settings' statement of purpose as needed.

We have also committed to pay childcare providers for the Childcare Offer hours that would have been taken up by parents in normal circumstances, for a period of three months. Many other business support measures have been announced that we hope will help childcare providers in these difficult times.

I understand that you will have many questions and queries about how to deliver services whilst complying with the strict rules designed to slow the spread of coronavirus. To assist you with operational matters, the Welsh Government has published COVID-19 guidance in respect of Flying

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Start, Families First and the Childcare Offer. Further guidance will issue shortly on the Children and Communities Grant and an FAQ document for Flying Start and Families First is also being produced. Guidance will continue to be made available via the online community of practice: [ExChange: Family and Community](#).

I would like to reaffirm some of the main points from the Flying Start and Families First guidance:

- Services need to be delivered in a way that is consistent with the expert scientific advice being provided by the Welsh and UK Governments.¹ This will mean that you will need to offer a greater number of services by telephone contact, social media and online.
- These services remain crucial to families across Wales so we expect every effort to be made to reach as many families as possible through appropriate means during this time.
- These are temporary measures in response to unprecedented circumstances. They will be in place initially for 3 months with immediate effect and we will review whether they need to remain in place on a regular basis thereafter. Flying Start and Families First Programmes should return to delivering a full programme of activities when normal arrangements return.
- Welsh Government will be taking the disruption into account when reviewing performance against agreed performance levels in relation to caseloads and CAP, which is the upper limit on the number of children as well as the amount of money a Local Authority can spend.
- In the meantime, you will need to use professional judgement to identify how to support at risk and vulnerable groups (like those with safeguarding needs and/or disabled children).

I was pleased to learn of some of the innovative ways in which you are continuing to deliver services. Many practitioners have embraced technology and are reaching families through social media with some activities, such as family therapy and parenting support, being provided via Skype. It is essential that families are aware that local authority services are still available to them albeit with some reduced capacity and we must ensure that we do not lose sight of our most vulnerable families.

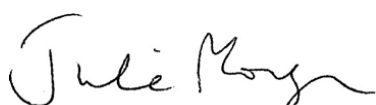
My officials will continue to work with you and help with any concerns or issues you may have. Any further programme related queries should be directed to the relevant programme mailboxes: familiesfirst@gov.wales or FlyingStart2@gov.wales.

Any queries relating to expenditure and the terms and conditions of the Children and Communities Grant must be directed to FlexibleFunding@gov.wales

For childcare related queries please use Talkchildcare@gov.wales

On behalf of the Welsh Government, thank you again for all that you are doing to support some of our most disadvantaged families through this difficult time.

Yours sincerely



Julie Morgan AC/AM

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>